



# Teaching and Learning in Universities: Bangladesh Perspective

M. M. SHAHIDUL HASSAN

**B**ANGLADESH is set to be a middle income country by 2021. To achieve that status the country needs highly skilled workforce equipped with innovative and creative abilities. Higher education is recognised today as a capital investment and is of paramount importance for economic and social development of a country (Barnet, 1990). Education researchers in Bangladesh pointed out that the present higher education system employs rote memorisation approach rather than critical thinking by students. It is, therefore, needed not only to relook at our teaching learning principles and methods but also to revitalise the higher education system.

The main challenge here is that universities in Bangladesh are not keen to make such changes. Public universities are preservationists and reluctant to shift existing traditional education system to an ability-driven education system which can produce higher-level of employment of skilled smart graduates. Many private universities of the country run academic programmes in small rented buildings and have failed to create academic environment. This author believes that at the present stage universities without undertaking major changes can provide 'quality teaching' in order to ensure it meets the expectations of students and the requirements of employers, both today and for the future. Quality teaching and learning can be achieved through continuous upgrading in pedagogy, use of technologies, assessment models aligned with student-centred learning, creating of innovative learning platforms and also assessing impacts and documenting effectiveness of the teaching delivered. Different perspectives that exist on the topic of quality in teaching are discussed here.

Quality teaching has become an issue of importance as the landscape of higher education has been undergoing continuous changes. The student body in Bangladesh has considerably expanded and diversified, both socially and nationally. Students call for new teaching methods. Modern technologies have entered the classroom, thus modifying the nature of the interac-

tions between students and teachers. Stakeholders such as the government, the students and their families, and the employers increasingly demand value for their money and desire more efficiency through teaching.

As universities abroad are developing an increasing student-centred focus, learning communities in Bangladesh should take a paradigm shift from teacher-centred to student-centred. In teacher-centred method theoretical knowledge is disseminated through the technique of talk and chalk. The teacher-centred approach is described as a way of teaching in which students are considered to be more or less the passive recipients of information transmitted from the teachers to the students. Teacher-centred

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ted instruction doesn't allow students to express themselves, ask questions and direct their own learning.

When education is teacher-centred, the classroom remains orderly. Students are quiet, and the teacher retains full control of the classroom and its activities. Because students learn on their own; they learn to be independent and make their own decisions. In real life students learn by doing and interaction; and this is reinforced by the use of student-centred instruction. The student-centred approach is described as a way of teaching which sees teaching as facilitating

the students' learning processes.

Instead of listening to the teacher exclusively, students and teachers interact equally. Because students are talking, classrooms are often busy, noisy and chaotic. Even though student-centred approach has some disadvantages, it is the most preferred method of teaching, and our teachers should move toward a student-centred approach.

However, some students maintain that teacher-centred education is the more effective strategy. For these reason in many western universities in most cases, it may be best for some teachers to use a combination of approaches to ensure that all needs of the students are met.

There are two different approaches

to learning: surface level learning and deep level learning. Surface level learning tends to be associated with those learners who concentrate on memorising what the lecturer said (Marton and Saljo, 1984) and low level cognitive activities tend to be involved. The learner selects and prioritises what they need to learn. Successful learning and studying in higher education should involve students in deep learning.

A key distinction is that a deep approach involves the intention to understand and creates meaning from what is being learned, whereas a surface approach involves an intention

to reproduce. Until teaching to elicit an active response from students, e.g. by questioning and presenting problems, rather than teaching to expound information, there isn't much chance that students will reject surface approach and opt for the deep learning approach. When teaching is teacher-focused and emphasises transmission of information, students will choose surface learning. A high perceived workload will more likely result in surface approaches to studying and might be detrimental to deep learning. Students who perceive the workload as high in their learning environment are more likely to display a lack of interest in their studies as well as exhaustion.

Another factor that can lead to more surface learning is the assessment methods used. If the assessment is perceived as not rewarding deep learning, students will rely on surface learning. Therefore, the role of assessment is important to take into account in studies on surface learning. There are different types of student-centred approach. Problem-based learning (PBL) is a student-centred instructional approach that is implemented at many universities worldwide. PBL fosters deep learning. Project-based Learning and Task-based Learning are also popular instructional approaches.

In the process of learning it is impossible to learn any concrete issue by using only one method. The teacher has to use different methods during the teaching process; also a combination of methods can be used. In the process of teaching, methods often supplement one other. We can expect such effective teaching from teachers who are fully aware of different methods. Our teachers in general are not exposed to modern pedagogies used in developed countries. Teachers need to understand modern pedagogies first and develop their own understanding before inventing the method/methods that will work best for our students. Both public and private universities in Bangladesh should establish Centre for Teaching and Learning to provide professional development to faculty.

*The writer is the Vice Chancellor, East West University. Email: vc@ewubd.edu*